

Lakewood - Congresswoman Linda Sánchez will travel to Colombia next week to increase attention on the debate over the proposed U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA). She will use the trip to talk with members of Colombia's legislature and civil society leaders about the FTA's potential negative consequences.

"The Colombian FTA is another bad trade deal for working families in the United States and in Colombia," said Congresswoman Sánchez. "This deal is an extension of the bad NAFTA model that, over the last decade, has contributed to the decline in real wages for American families, the increase of our trade deficit, and the erosion of our manufacturing industry.

"This deal would also gut Colombia's legitimate agricultural industry, which will likely lead to higher production of drug crops by farmers who can't compete with subsidized American produce," added Congresswoman Sánchez.

According to a recent report by the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, a non-profit organization that advocates for workers' rights abroad, Colombia is the "deadliest country in the world to be a trade union member." The report says that more union activists are killed in Colombia each year than the rest of the world combined, with approximately 4,000 trade unionists killed over the last 20 years.

"As bad as this deal is for the U.S., it could be even worse for Colombia," said Congresswoman Sánchez. "Without the demonstrated commitment of the Colombian government to protect workers, any increase in manufacturing jobs will likely lead to abusive labor conditions and wages."

The trip is being arranged by Oxfam America, a non-profit organization that works to end global poverty.

The U.S.-Colombia FTA was signed by the Bush Administration on Wednesday, and must be approved by the legislatures of both countries before being implemented.